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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [BO](#)

SUBJECT: KOZULIN URGES CONTINUED PRESSURE ON REGIME

REF: A. 06 MINSK 1278

[1](#)B. MINSK 139 (AND PREVIOUS)

Classified By: Ambassador Karen Stewart for reason 1.4 (d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Political prisoner Aleksandr Kozulin was released on a three-day furlough February 26 to attend his wife's funeral. Kozulin met Ambassador just hours after his release and expressed his thanks to her and the people of the United States for their efforts on his behalf. Kozulin said that he expects to be incarcerated again on the completion of his furlough, and called for increased sanctions from the U.S. and EU against the regime. He discussed plans both for a new hunger strike and a libel suit against Lukashenko for comments the dictator made in the waning days of his wife's life. Though exact plans remain to be finalized, his wife's funeral is tentatively set for Wednesday, February 27. End comment.

"I'm Grateful to the U.S. for Saving My Life"

[1](#)2. (C) Aleksandr Kozulin, recently furloughed to attend his wife's funeral, was effusive in his praise for the U.S. for its efforts both for Belarus and on his own behalf. He asked the Ambassador to thank the President, the Secretary and the Department for "saving his life," by intervening to have his case raised at the United Nations and ending his 2006 hunger strike (ref A).

[1](#)3. (C) Kozulin did not hide his derision for the Lukashenko regime, as he noted that plans for his wife's funeral had yet to be finalized because authorities had not approved a plot for Irina Kozulina in Minsk's Moskovskiy Cemetery. Kozulin did not ask for embassy advocacy on his family's behalf on this issue, but added that he had mentioned the difficulties to reveal the true face of Lukashenko's totalitarian regime.

Expects to Be Arrested Again, Calls for Tougher Sanctions

[1](#)4. (C) Kozulin told the Ambassador that he fully expects to be incarcerated again when his three-day furlough ends Thursday, February 28, and added that he expects even harsher treatment, including solitary confinement. While he had not determined a date, he said that he would protest his continued detention with a hunger strike, rejecting both food and liquids, and saying that he was prepared to continue this strike "to the end." He also said that his family's lawyers plan to file a libel suit against Aleksandr Lukashenko for statements the dictator made just days before Irina

Kozulina's death on his decision to reject release conditioned on travel to Germany, ostensibly for his wife's "treatment." Kozulin said that by profaning sacred things like love, family and even death, Lukashenko had permanently altered his image in the minds of Belarusians.

Expect No Logic, Lukashenko Understands Only Force

15. (C) Noting that he knew Lukashenko better than anyone, Kozulin warned the Ambassador that when the dictator was acting on emotion, as he was these days, little logic or rational action should be expected from him. Since Lukashenko "understood only force" Kozulin advised the Ambassador that the U.S. and EU should offer new, tougher coordinated sanctions that would target Belarusian exports, including industrial giants like vehicle producers MAZ and BelAZ, fertilizer producer Belaruskaliy and the Belneftekhim petrochemical conglomerate. The Ambassador noted that the U.S. continued to insist on Kozulin's unconditional release, and that if this did not take place soon, the USG would move to expand its sanctions against the Lukashenko regime.

Comment

16. (C) We agree with Kozulin that international pressure, particularly USG sanctions, provided the primary motivation for the regime's release of six political prisoners over the past month. In the event that Lukashenko does not make Kozulin's release permanent and unconditional additional sanctions will be both necessary and proper.
STEWART